

BRG – TERC – STEM Roundtable Discussion Part 4 – Transcript

Narrator:

Welcome to Part 4 of Bridge Multimedia and TERC's accessible video podcast series, *Advancing Racial Equity in the Deaf STEM Community*, funded by the National Science Foundation. Part 4's titled: *BIPOC Representation in the STEM Landscape: Where are We?* Our moderator is Djenne-amal Morris. Guests include: Dominic Harrison, K. Renee Horton, Charity Jackson, Adebowale Ogunjirin, Kristie Medeiros, and Jeanine Pollard. Now, I'm proud to present Djenne-amal Morris with *BIPOC Representation in the STEM Landscape: Where are We?*

Djenne-amal Morris:

We've talked about some of the challenges, I would invite our panelists today to share how you have seen progress in the field of STEM. Have you been a part of that progress or maybe the one that's pushing the progress?

Dr. K. Renee Horton:

Racial equity and representation in STEM still hasn't changed a whole lot. We're still seeing first, one only, one of. And so when you're still having that, this year makes 20 years from my undergraduate and last year made ten years from my Ph.D.. And so being in this now almost 20 years, I'm still

seeing first. I'm still mentoring students who are the only at their university, or there's only three women at the university, whether they're white, Latino or Black. And so to have those numbers still the way that they are says we're still not doing something right. We're still not doing it right at the elementary level, right?

And even though there are more young girls who see us and see those who are public, you know, who are out there, we're still not making enough of those strides in our country to be able to make that change the way I would really like to be able to see that change. I would love to be able to see that the students come to me because they want me to mentor a group or a class because that class is a 5050 right and we can teach our guys how they're supposed to treat our ladies later on, when they're their bosses or things like that. And so for me, it's still a little disheartening that we just don't have that advancement just yet.

Jeanine Pollard:

So I think I agree with others that not much has changed since my time as an undergrad, specifically related to representation within STEM. But what I am noticing is a shift. And when I say representation, I mean, people graduating from undergrad, with STEM careers, folks continuing on to get

masters, going to technical school, other programs, getting a PhD, really folks continuing their education in STEM beyond high school. So what I notice is a change in the stories that are out there. Social media has so many different creators. You know, I don't know, I feel like back 10 years ago when I was an undergrad, there wasn't the same variety of different places to go to find stories of people. Specifically people who had similar experiences to mine. And I wonder if I've been able to grab my phone and pull up a TikTok video and there was a Black women in STEM there and seeing some of my own experiences from them learning how to navigate the challenges that I was experiencing in school. I wonder how that would've maybe changed my own experience and kinda persisting in STEM.

So I encourage folk to go on social media find hashtags of folks related to your majors, and like learn what other stories are out there. Because I think that's where we're gonna see more representation. So mainstream or ... not mainstream, but not big news stories, but thinking about social media as a community where stories are gonna show up.

Adebowale Ogunjirin:

I just want to clarify your question, Djenne, you talked about seeing progress in the STEM field. Are you talking about progress for BIPOC people in STEM fields? Okay, and I see that you're saying yes. Okay. Well, I'm not sure if I can say much, but when I got to the United States, I noticed very few people, very few BIPOC people in the STEM fields. And at that time, I was an international student, and I was able to enter some of these spaces because there were so few BIPOC people in that field.

Because I was so knowledgeable in this field and I already had a lot of education and everything, I think I was able to get close to getting into some of those fields. And so if I compare that to now, and I kind of look at, I kind of look around at the field that I'm in now, I do see a modest increase. I think that is in some respects due to Gallaudet University and Gallaudet's push to include, pull enrollment in for BIPOC students, and also for BIPOC faculty and staff at Gallaudet. And I think that is something that has been pushed for by BIPOC people. And what I have noticed is this sense of community and partnership within the BIPOC community, people working together.

For example, when I got my job, there was really no mentorship available to me. I kind of wasn't really sure who I could go and talk to. And I wasn't really clear how to navigate. And I had my boss who was telling me when I did something wrong, and I was really alone. I had the feeling of really being alone and the way it is now on campus is that if I have an issue, there are other people that I feel free that I can go to and ask for help.

Whereas before I didn't feel like I could do that, I felt like if I asked for help, maybe it would be documented, so I had to kind of keep things to myself.

So that's one thing I can speak just for being on Gallaudet University campus. And then also I have seen more increased enrollment of BIPOC students. Certainly we have a long way to go, and as a professor, I do mentor BIPOC students frequently. You know, I do have a lot of students who approach me and come up to me because they feel this freedom to talk to me and, they'll share with me some of the struggles that they're having academically. And it kind of makes me wonder if we can look to elementary school and high school as kind of the root of that. And then they ended up coming to university with the residual problems and kind of the challenges that didn't get met earlier on.

And I had one BIPOC student, who told me that in high school, they would still be promoted to the next grade, even though they weren't really academically ready, but it was just kind of like, okay, they're aged out, they're ready for the next grade. And what the result of that is, is that there's a lot of attrition and people end up dropping out. So I think that's where that high kind of dropout rate, there is a high rate of students who drop out before they graduate.

So there is progress and yes, there's also more work that needs to be done as far as increasing opportunities, making more training and support available for BIPOC students in college. And as far as those students that I mentor, who are doing summer research there are very few mentors available for those people where they can go across the country. There are very few. So, I think there is a need for more opportunities for people to be able to come to faculty and express themselves when they need to.

Narrator:

We hope you enjoyed *BIPOC Representation in the STEM Landscape*:

Where are We? Part 4 of our video podcast series: *Advancing Racial*

Equity in the Deaf STEM Community. Don't miss our concluding podcast

Part 5: *Creating a Positive Cycle of Representation*, Other parts include:

Part 1: *Introductions & Aspirations*; Part 2: *Challenges: Personal & Professional*; and Part 3: *The Power of Mentorship*. Thank you for joining us.

Credits:

Participants: Djene-amal Morris, Moderator and Speaker.

Guest Speakers: Dominic Harrison; K. Renee Horton; Charity Jackson; Adebowale Ogunjirin; Kristie Medeiros; and Jeanine Pollard.

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